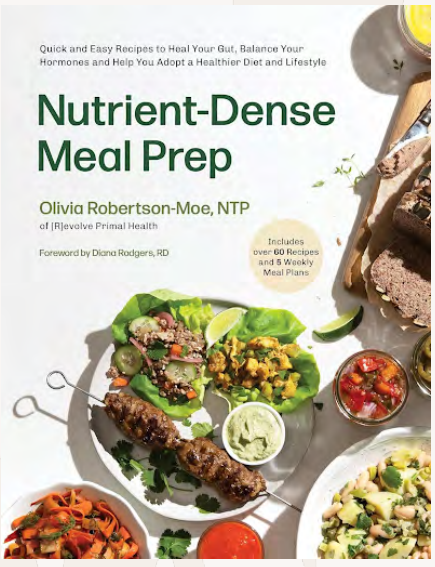
MEAL PREP MARCH

SUSTAINABLE DISH

Diana Rodgers, RD

sustainabledish.com | sacredcow.info

This month's guide is all about meal prep! We will talk about the importance of meal prep, top tips for actually making meal prep work, the best approach to meal prep, plus some exclusive recipes from a new cookbook I am so excited about: Nutrient-Dense Meal Prep: Quick and Easy Recipes to Heal Your Gut, Balance Your Hormones and Help You Adopt a Healthier Diet and Lifestyle by Olivia Robertson-Moe.



WHY SHOULD I MEAL PREP?

Save time

Meal prep is a game-changer when it comes to saving time and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. By dedicating a few hours each week to plan and prepare meals in advance, you can make a healthy daily routine realistic and attainable. The time spent chopping vegetables, cooking proteins, and assembling balanced dishes in bulk pays off throughout the week, as it eliminates the need for daily cooking sessions.

Stick to your goals

When life gets busy during a busy work week or managing your family's schedule, it can be easy to put your diet and health on the back burner. With pre-prepared meals readily available, you can easily grab a nutritious option, reducing the temptation to opt for less healthy, convenient alternatives like fast food or takeout. Not only does meal prep save time on day-to-day cooking, but it also fosters better eating habits, making it much easier to achieve your health goals and feel your best!

Reduce food waste & save money

When you plan out your weekly meals in advance, you can create shopping lists that align with the recipes, ensuring you buy only what is needed. By accurately portioning out ingredients and utilizing leftovers creatively, meal preppers can make the most of perishable items before they spoil. Batch cooking and freezing prepared meals helps extend the lifespan of food, preventing it from going to waste. The conscious approach to meal prep not only contributes to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle but also helps you save money by maximizing the use of ingredients and reducing the need for frequent grocery trips.

A Better Approach to Meal Prep

Have you ever meal prepped a big batch of one dish and three days in you're sick of eating the same thing for every meal so you ditch the meal prep and order take out? We've all been there.

That's why I really like Olivia's approach to meal prep. The book is divided into sections based on macronutrients and components of a balanced plate, like Easy Prep Proteins, Healthier Carbohydrates, and Versatile Veggies. The idea is that you can choose a few recipes from each category, spend a few hours on your meal prep day preparing them, and then you have a fridge stocked with cooked proteins, carbs, and veggies to build a variety of balanced meals throughout the week.

Not only does this approach make your meal prep days a bit less stressful and daunting, it also means you can mix up what you're eating throughout the week so that you don't get bored of your food.

The book also has a section on Sauces and Condiments like Spicy Cilantro Sauce and Fermented Hot Sauce that you can keep stocked in your fridge to add unique flavors to any meal.

Try it out this week: Choose 2 proteins, 2 veggie dishes, and 2 healthy carbohydrates to prep and stock your (fridge or) freezer.

Prioritize Protein

One of the best things to focus on in meal prep is protein. Protein typically takes the most preparation time, it is a critical macronutrients that many people struggle to get in their diet, and it makes a huge difference in your health when you prioritize protein in your meals.

A great way to save money while also batching cooking many portions of protein is by cooking large cuts of meat. These are often more affordable than steaks (or) chicken breast and they also taste delicious when cooked using longer cooking methods, meaning you can set it and forget it.

To get you started, here's a delicious recipe from the Nutrient-Dense Meal Prep cookbook for Family-Size Pork Carnitas.

Olivia's cookbook has other great large batch protein recipes like Nutrient-Rich Liver Meatballs, Make-and-Freeze Kebabs, and Batched Shepherd's Pie. If you struggle to get your protein in, this cookbook will help you out!

Family-Size Pork Carnitas

Taco night just got more delicious and even more time-friendly. Slow cooking a pork shoulder requires only a few minutes of hands-on effort and yields a huge batch of tender, flavorful meat. Prep a batch of this carnitas meat to serve a large crowd or stock your fridge to feed a family all week. Not only is this dish a great source of quality protein, but pork is rich in such essential nutrients as thiamine, vitamins B_6 and B_{12}, selenium and zinc.

Yield: 9 to 10 servings

- 1 tbsp (15 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp (18 g) sea salt
- 1 tbsp (2 g) dried oregano
- 1½ tsp (4 g) ground cumin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 (5- to 6-lb [2.3- to 2.7-kg]) bone-in pork shoulder
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup (240 ml) fresh orange juice
- 1 cup (240 ml) Simplified Bone Broth (page xx)

Twenty-four to 48 hours before you will be cooking the meat, make the marinade: In a small bowl, combine the olive oil, sea salt, oregano, cumin and smoked paprika. Massage the marinade into the pork shoulder and return it to the fridge to marinate for 24 to 48 hours.

On the day of cooking, remove the meat from the fridge and let it come to room temperature for 1 to 2 hours before cooking.

This can be cooked in an oven or a pressure cooker. If you're baking it, preheat the oven to 275°F (140°C).

In a large, oven-safe dish, combine the meat, onion, jalapeño, garlic, orange juice and bone broth. Bake for 4 hours, or until the meat is fork-tender. Alternatively, cook the mixture in your slow cooker on the LOW setting for 8 hours or on the HIGH setting for 6 hours.

Once the pork is cooked through and fork-tender, use a fork to shred the meat, reserving the cooking juices. When you are ready to serve, on a baking sheet, combine the shredded meat with 1 cup (240 ml) of its cooking juices, and broil for 2 to 3 minutes, or until crispy.

Serve with Fresh Corn Tortillas (page xx) or in a bowl with the Gut-Friendly Herb Rice (page xx). I love to top it with white onion, fresh cilantro, radish and the Probiotic-Rich Salsa (page xx) or Fermented Hot Sauce (page xx).

You can store this in the fridge for 4 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months. To reheat, thaw in the fridge overnight and bake in a 350°F (180°C) oven until warmed through. Finish under the broiler for 1 to 2 minutes until crispy.

Why Is Protein Especially Important for Seniors?

Protein—an essential macronutrient for seniors—plays a crucial role in maintaining strength, repairing body tissue, and supporting immune function. As we age, protein becomes even more important because it helps prevent age-related muscle loss (known as sarcopenia) (2).

Sarcopenia is a condition characterized by the loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength, which increases with age. It's a major cause of functional decline and loss of independence among older adults. Although sarcopenia is a natural part of the aging process, inadequate nutrition, lack of physical activity, and chronic illness can exacerbate its progression (2).

1 Simple Way to Increase Protein In Your Diet

Include Protein Powder in Your Diet

Protein powder is perhaps the simplest way to get an extra 20+ grams of protein in your day. Simply add 1-2 scoops to your cup of coffee or a quality nut milk. Other ideas include adding it to smoothies and baked goods. And if you have an unflavored protein powder, the options are limitless—add it to mashed potatoes, soups, sauces, and dressings.

NativeTip: It's not just about quantity but also the quality of protein you consume. If budget allows, opt for cage-free, pasture-raised, grass-fed, and wild-caught protein sources.

Meal Prep Your Breakfast

Starting your day with a savory, high protein breakfast is one of the best ways to manage blood sugar levels, have steady energy throughout the day, and reduce cravings. So many people have busy mornings so they reach for a convenient bar or bowl of cereal which sets their blood sugar on a roller coaster, leading to energy crashes and intense cravings later in the day.

I constantly get questions about recipe ideas for high protein breakfasts because people tend to get bored of a giant plate of eggs. Here are some ideas:

- Egg bakes or frittata
- Boiled eggs
- Greek yogurt & fruit
- Dinner leftovers

Olivia's book has a whole section on high-protein breakfasts that are meal prep friendly, like Single-Serving Frittatas, Mini Meat Muffins, and even sweet options like High-Protein Pancakes. If you want to start meal prepping breakfast, check out the recipes in her book.

Avoid Soggy Produce

When meal prepping side dishes like veggies and healthy carbohydrates, it's important to choose options that will keep well in the fridge for a few days. For example, a salad with dressing isn't the best meal prep option because it will get soggy and unappetizing very quickly.

If you're looking for a good meal prep option that packs tons of fresh veggies and fiber, try out this Middle Eastern Lentil Salad from the Nutrient-Dense Meal Prep cookbook.

- 1 cup (225 g) dried green or brown lentils
- 2 cups (475 ml) Simplified Bone Broth (page xx) or water
- 3 cloves garlic, divided
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ cup (60 ml) extra virgin olive oil
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp sea salt
- 2 medium-sized cucumbers, diced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 cup (60 g) fresh parsley, chopped finely
- ½ cup (75 g) crumbled feta cheese

Rinse the lentils and pick through them to remove any stones or debris. Transfer the lentils to a large bowl and cover with water. Let sit on the counter to soak for 12 hours.

Drain and rinse the lentils. Transfer them to a medium-sized saucepan and cover with the bone broth or water. Add two of the garlic cloves and the bay leaf to the pot. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer, cover with a lid and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The lentils are done when they are just tender but not yet getting mushy. Remove from the heat, discard the bay leaf and garlic cloves, drain any remaining liquid and transfer the lentils to a large bowl to let cool for 10 to 15 minutes.

While the lentils cool, make the dressing by combining the olive oil, lemon zest and juice, mustard and sea salt.

Add the cucumber, tomatoes, red onion, parsley and feta to the bowl of lentils. Pour the dressing over and toss to combine.

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Don't Forget Something Sweet

If you are trying to follow a nutrient-dense, whole food diet, that doesn't mean sweets have to be completely off the table. A yummy dessert now and then is part of a healthy, balanced life. Plus, when you prep your desserts at home you can make them full of nourishing ingredients.

Olivia's book includes 10 delicious dessert recipes that are all gluten free, made with simple, real food ingredients, naturally sweetened, and include protein and fat to make them more blood sugar friendly. The best part is that they are easy to prep in advance and have in your fridge or freezer. One of my favorites is the Single Serve Key Lime Pie that you can portion into small ramekins to enjoy in moderation.

Single-Serving Key Lime Pie

This dessert is like a flavor bomb in your mouth—sweet, nutty crust, topped with a creamy tart filling and fresh whipped cream. It's everything we love about Key lime pie, but with much less sugar, naturally gluten-free, and can be made dairy-free if needed. This recipe makes five single servings that can be eaten right away, or store them in the freezer and thaw when you want a taste of summer on a Florida beach! For easy storage, assemble these directly in a small Mason jar that you can add a lid to.

Yield: 5 servings

½ cup (67 g) raw macadamia nuts
½ cup (50 g) raw pecans
1 date, pitted
Pinch of sea salt
½ cup (120 m) fresh lime juice
1 medium-sized avocado, peeled, pitted and cubed
1 tbsp (15 ml) raw honey or pure maple syrup
2 tbsp (30 ml) coconut cream
¼ tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp (30 g) coconut butter
¼ tsp spirulina powder (optional)
½ cup (120 ml) cold heavy cream or coconut cream
½ tsp vanilla extract

In a food processor or blender, combine the macadamia nuts, pecans, date and sea salt, and blend until the nuts are finely chopped and have combined with the date. The mixture should be crumbly but stick together when you press it together in your hand. Divide the mixture equally among five 4-ounce (120-ml) Mason jars, using clean hands or the back of a spoon to push it down into a solid crust.

In a clean blender or food processor, combine the lime juice, avocado, honey, coconut cream and vanilla, and blend for 20 to 30 seconds, or until just mixed. Add the coconut butter and spirulina powder (if using), then blend until smooth and fully combined. Divide the mixture equally among the jars.

Make the homemade whipped cream topping: In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer, combine the heavy cream and vanilla, then use an electric hand mixer or the stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment to whisk on high speed, about 1 minute, until medium-stiff peaks form. Divide the mixture equally among the jars.

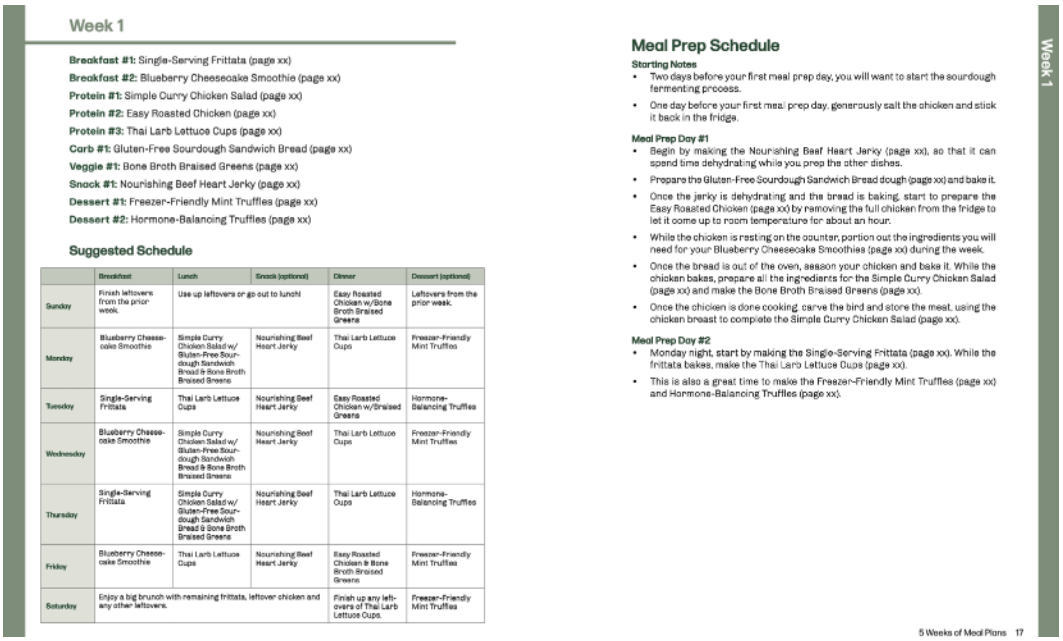
Seal each jar with a lid and store in the fridge for 3 to 4 days. To freeze, store in the freezer for up to 3 months. When ready to serve, thaw in the fridge until soft.

If you're a part of the Sustainable Dish community, you've likely been following our conversation around the benefits of electrolytes beyond basic hydration. (If you've missed out, visit our blog post here) One of my favorite ways to make sure I am getting enough each day is LMNT's seasonal Chocolate Medley of limited-time flavors! The Chocolate Raspberry with a splash of milk is the most delicious "hot chocolate" I've had in a long time! I'd hate for you to miss your chance to get a box of Chocolate Medley flavors this season, so order now while it's still available. You will also receive a free sample of their regular flavors with your order! Click here to get both the Chocolate Medley and your free sample.

Make a Plan

Don't overwhelm yourself with preparing every single meal for the week in one day. Set aside a couple hours on a day where you have some free time and prep a few recipes so that you have some (remove the word some) nourishing food on hand. Organization will be your best friend when it comes to preparing food without spending hours every day in the kitchen and to get the best bang for your grocery buck.

If you feel overwhelmed with choosing what dishes to cook and how to meal prep them, Olivia's book has you covered. She set up 5 different weekly meal plans that makes meal prepping and following a nutrient-dense diet easy. Each meal plan includes a suggested calendar for your meals and a schedule for organizing your meal prep so you can easily follow along.



Week 1

Breakfast #1: Single-Serving Frittata (page xx)
Breakfast #2: Blueberry Cheesecake Smoothie (page xx)
Protein #1: Simple Curry Chicken Salad (page xx)
Protein #2: Easy Roasted Chicken (page xx)
Protein #3: Thai Larb Lettuce Cups (page xx)
Carb #1: Gluten-Free Sourdough Sandwich Bread (page xx)
Veggie #1: Bone Broth Braised Greens (page xx)
Snack #1: Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky (page xx)
Dessert #1: Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles (page xx)
Dessert #2: Hormone-Balancing Truffles (page xx)

Suggested Schedule

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack (optional)	Dinner	Dessert (optional)
Sunday	Finish leftovers from the prior week.	Use up leftovers or go out to lunch!		Easy Roasted Chicken w/Bone Broth Braised Greens	Leftovers from the prior week.
Monday	Blueberry Cheese-cake Smoothie	Simple Curry Chicken Salad w/ Gluten-Free Sour-dough Sandwich Bread & Bone Broth Braised Greens	Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky	Thai Larb Lettuce Cups	Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles
Tuesday	Single-Serving Frittata	Thai Larb Lettuce Cups	Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky	Easy Roasted Chicken w/Braised Greens	Hormone-Balancing Truffles
Wednesday	Blueberry Cheese-cake Smoothie	Simple Curry Chicken Salad w/ Gluten-Free Sour-dough Sandwich Bread & Bone Broth Braised Greens	Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky	Thai Larb Lettuce Cups	Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles
Thursday	Single-Serving Frittata	Simple Curry Chicken Salad w/ Gluten-Free Sour-dough Sandwich Bread & Bone Broth Braised Greens	Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky	Thai Larb Lettuce Cups	Hormone-Balancing Truffles
Friday	Blueberry Cheese-cake Smoothie	Thai Larb Lettuce Cups	Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky	Easy Roasted Chicken & Bone Broth Braised Greens	Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles
Saturday	Enjoy a big brunch with remaining frittata, leftover chicken and any other leftovers.			Finish up any left-overs of Thai Larb Lettuce Cups.	Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles

Meal Prep Schedule

Starting Notes

- Two days before your first meal prep day, you will want to start the sourdough fermenting process.
- One day before your first meal prep day, generously salt the chicken and stick it back in the fridge.

Meal Prep Day #1

- Begin by making the Nourishing Beef Heart Jerky (page xx), so that it can spend time dehydrating while you prep the other dishes.
- Prepare the Gluten-Free Sourdough Sandwich Bread dough (page xx) and bake it.
- Once the jerky is dehydrating and the bread is baking, start to prepare the Easy Roasted Chicken (page xx) by removing the full chicken from the fridge to let it come up to room temperature for about an hour.
- While the chicken is resting on the counter, portion out the ingredients you will need for your Blueberry Cheesecake Smoothies (page xx) during the week.
- Once the bread is out of the oven, season your chicken and bake it. While the chicken bakes, prepare all the ingredients for the Simple Curry Chicken Salad (page xx) and make the Bone Broth Braised Greens (page xx).
- Once the chicken is done cooking, carve the bird and store the meat, using the chicken breast to complete the Simple Curry Chicken Salad (page xx).

Meal Prep Day #2

- Monday night, start by making the Single-Serving Frittata (page xx). While the frittata bakes, make the Thai Larb Lettuce Cups (page xx).
- This is also a great time to make the Freezer-Friendly Mint Truffles (page xx) and Hormone-Balancing Truffles (page xx).

Week 1

5 Weeks of Meal Plans 17

And remember, with practice this whole process becomes easier. You will master your favorite recipes, learn to multitask in the kitchen, and preparing nutritious meals will be fun and enjoyable rather than stressful.

I highly recommend investing in a resource like Nutrient-Dense Meal Prep. It comes out on March 12, but you can preorder it today! For just $23 you get a physical book with over 60 recipes, 5 weekly meal plans, and tons of information on sourcing quality ingredients while saving money.

All of the recipes are gluten-free, refined sugar free, and full of nourishing ingredients so that you can feed yourself and your family delicious meals that make you feel good too!

Not only will this book change your approach to cooking, but Olivia's book is all about *nutrient-dense* meal prep, so each recipe prioritizes nutrient-rich foods, such as meat, organ meat, seafood, a variety of seasonal fruits and veggies, starchy veggies and whole food carbs, and minimizes inflammatory foods, such as industrial seed oils, processed foods and refined carbs.

Order the book today!

Grass Fed Beef Giveaway

To get you started on your nutrient-dense meal prep journey I am partnering with Parker Pastures to give away 10 lbs of grass-fed beef.

This is the highest quality, 100% Grass-Fed AND Grass-finished beef, nutrient dense, and delicious beef around! And not only is their beef delicious, they raise their animals in a way that is good for the earth, good for the animals, and most importantly good for you!!

This package will be perfect to start preparing some of the nutrient-packed recipes in Olivia's book. Use the ground beef to make her **Nutrient-Rich Liver Meatballs** or the **Batched Shepherd's Pie** or make the **Comforting Short Rib Ragu**!

To enter to win over 10 lbs of AMAZING steaks, roast, ground beef, and more enter the Giveaway here.

*Only available in the lower 48 states. The box will be shipped at no charge to the winner's front door.

SUSTAINABLE DISH

DIANA RODGERS, RD

Diana Rodgers, RD, is a "real food" nutritionist and sustainability advocate near Boston, Massachusetts. She's an author of three books, runs a clinical nutrition practice, hosts the Sustainable Dish Podcast, and has served as an advisory board of numerous nutrition and agriculture organizations including Whole30, Animal Welfare Approved and Savory Institute. She speaks internationally about the intersection of optimal human nutrition and regenerative agriculture.

Diana is co-author of, Sacred Cow: The Case for (Better) Meat and the director, producer of the companion film, Sacred Cow. Her new initiative, the Global Food Justice Alliance, advocates for a nutritious, sustainable and equitable worldwide food system.

▸ Learn more at www.globalfoodjustice.org